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CONAN™

THE THING IN THE CAVE

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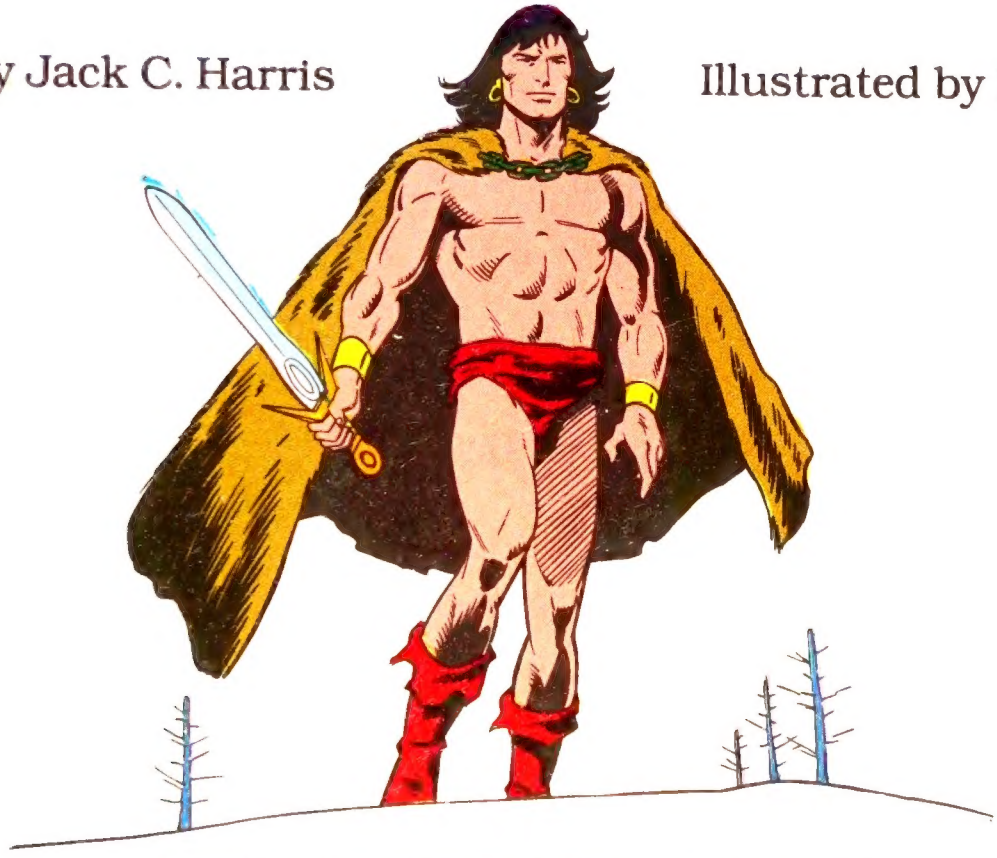

Based on the story *The Thing in the Crypt*,
an adventure of Robert E. Howard's Conan
by Lin Carter and L. Sprague de Camp

A GOLDEN BOOK · NEW YORK
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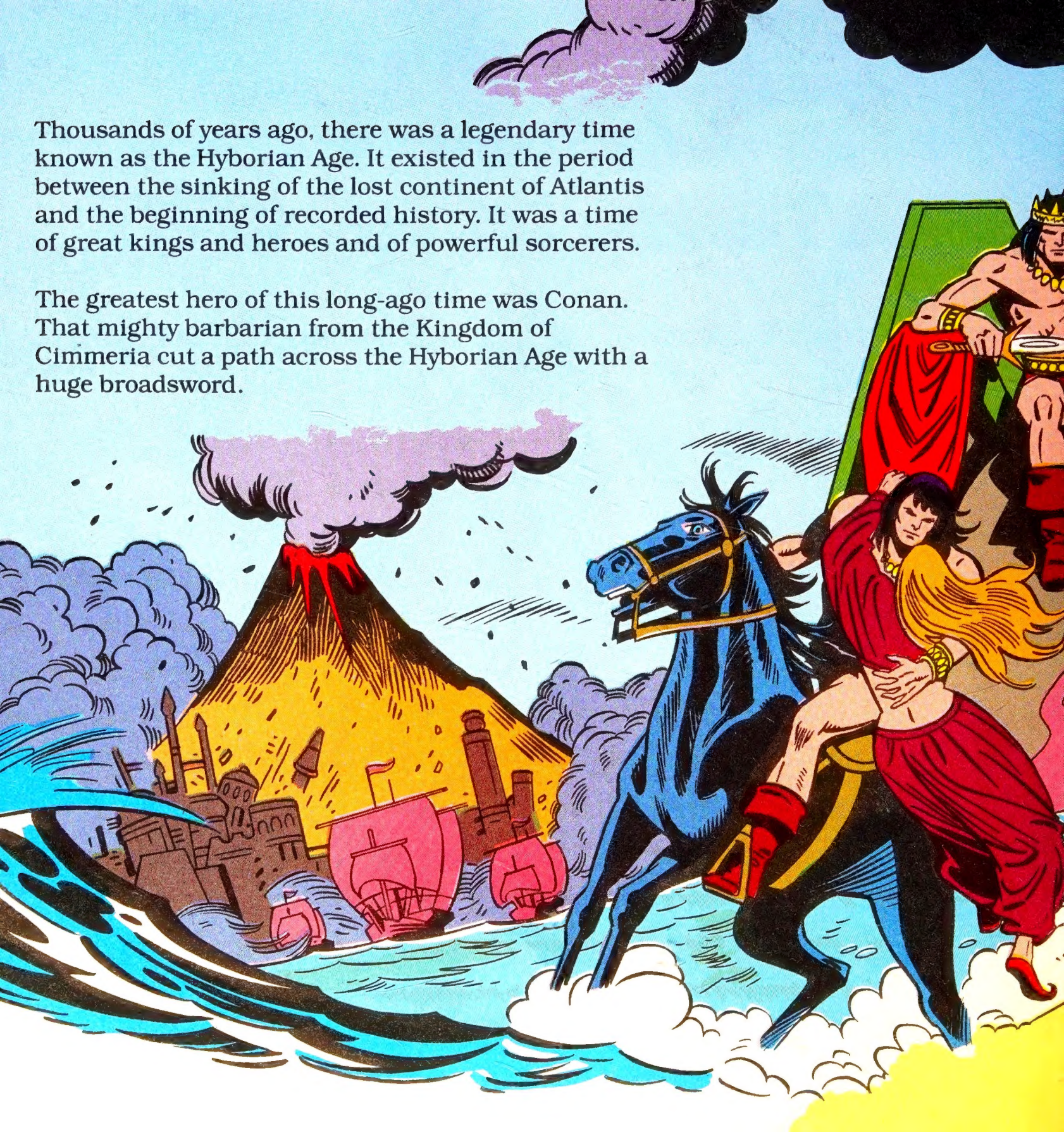
A B C D E F G H I J

Thousands of years ago, there was a legendary time known as the Hyborian Age. It existed in the period between the sinking of the lost continent of Atlantis and the beginning of recorded history. It was a time of great kings and heroes and of powerful sorcerers.

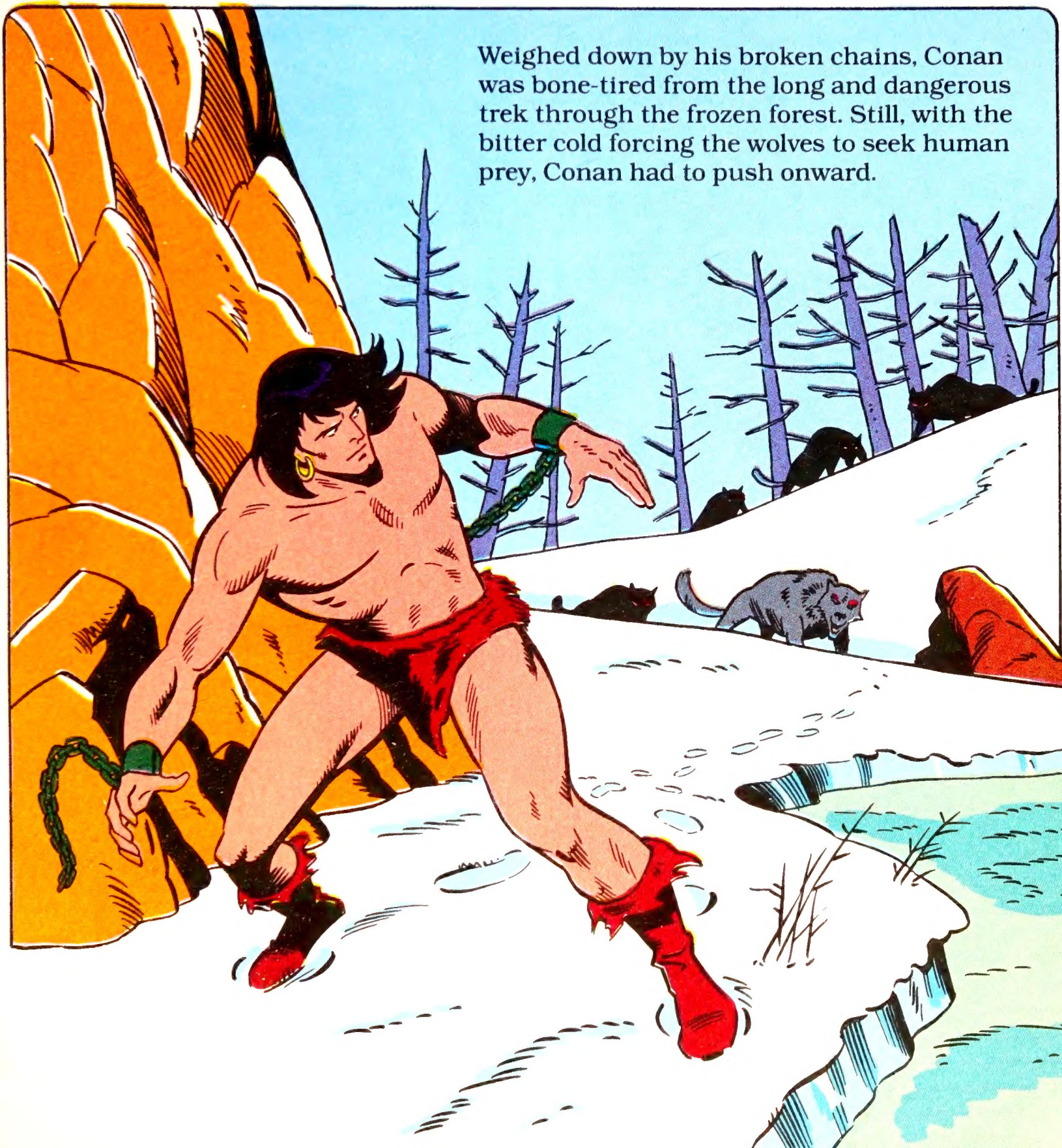
The greatest hero of this long-ago time was Conan. That mighty barbarian from the Kingdom of Cimmeria cut a path across the Hyborian Age with a huge broadsword.



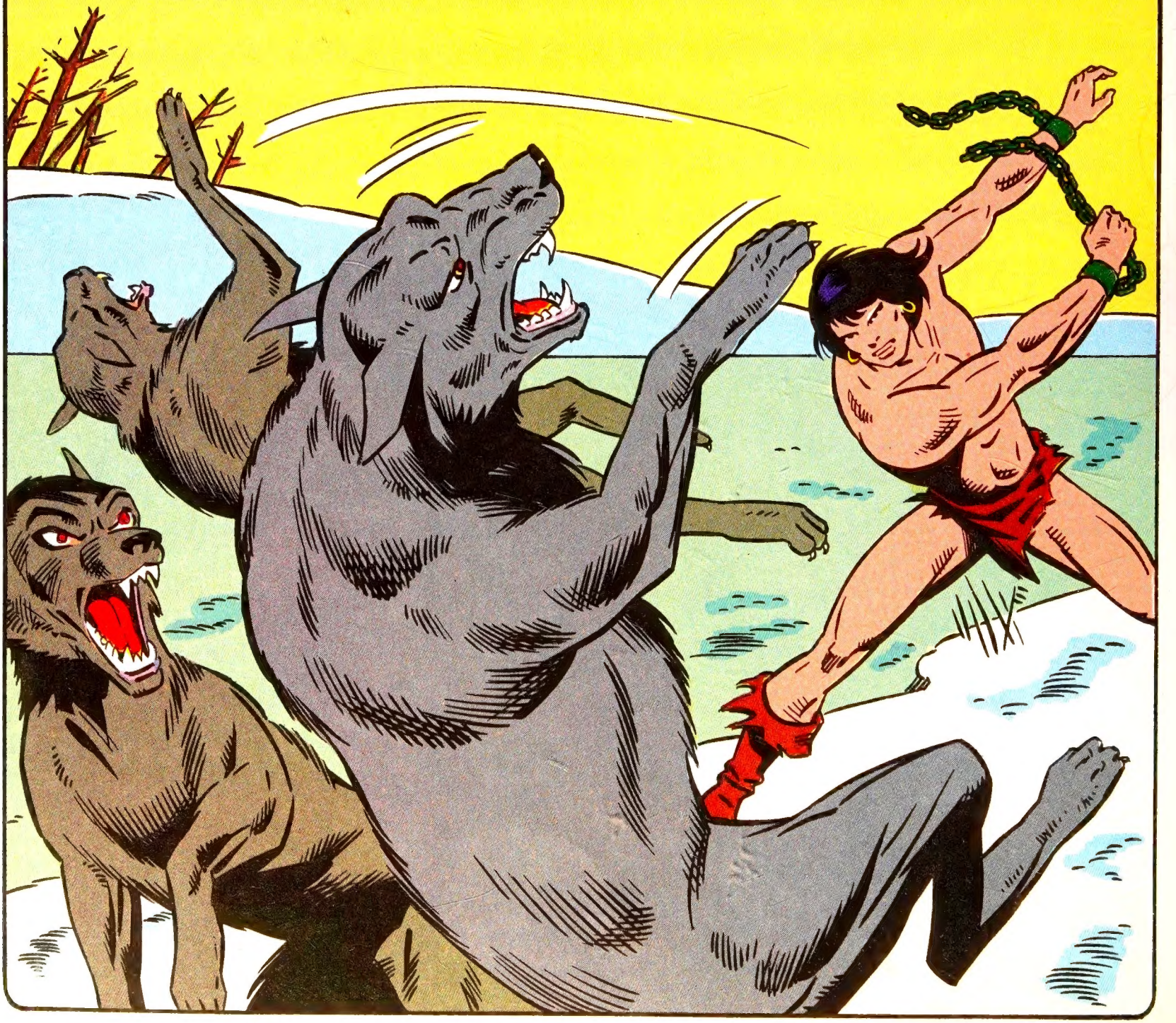
This is a story about Conan when he was still a teenager but already a force to reckon with.

For eighteen winters young Conan had learned the ways of his tribe. The Cimmerian barbarians often raided other tribes and fought powerful battles.

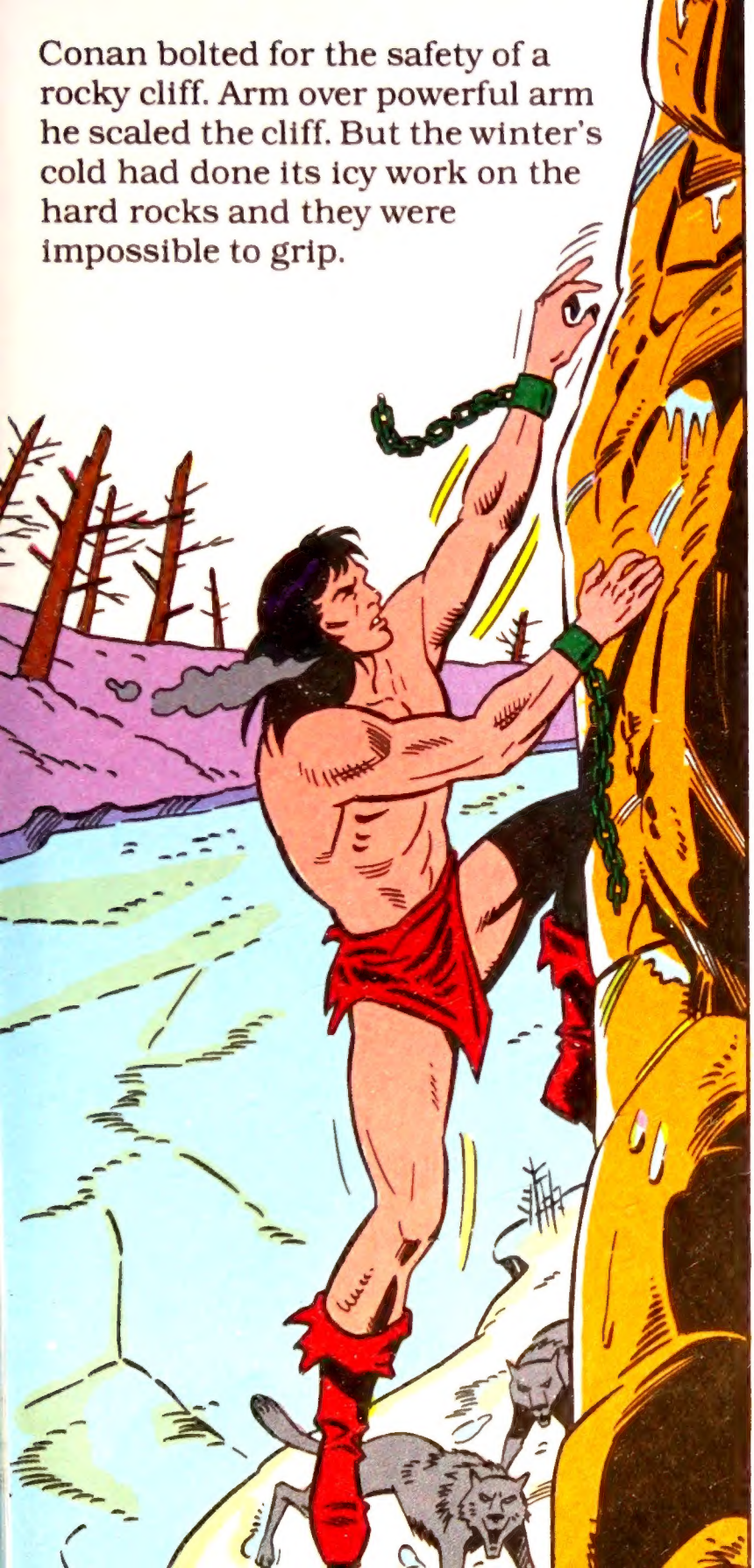
But then Conan was taken prisoner and chained to a dungeon wall. Because of his great strength, he was able to escape his captors. But he was far from home and had nowhere to go except for the icy forests of the land of Hyperborea.


Weighed down by his broken chains, Conan was bone-tired from the long and dangerous trek through the frozen forest. Still, with the bitter cold forcing the wolves to seek human prey, Conan had to push onward.

The wolves attacked, their snarling jaws ripping at the young barbarian. His last ounce of strength flowed into his arms as he lifted the pack's leader high over his head and flung the wolf into the midst of the hungry pack.



Conan bolted for the safety of a rocky cliff. Arm over powerful arm he scaled the cliff. But the winter's cold had done its icy work on the hard rocks and they were impossible to grip.



Conan fell hard. The impact both knocked him unconscious and broke the ice of the frozen river.

Night fell, and the river froze over, giving the wolves a new path to reach Conan. Regaining consciousness, the youthful warrior sprang to his feet. With his back to the wall of a cliff, he readied himself again for battle.

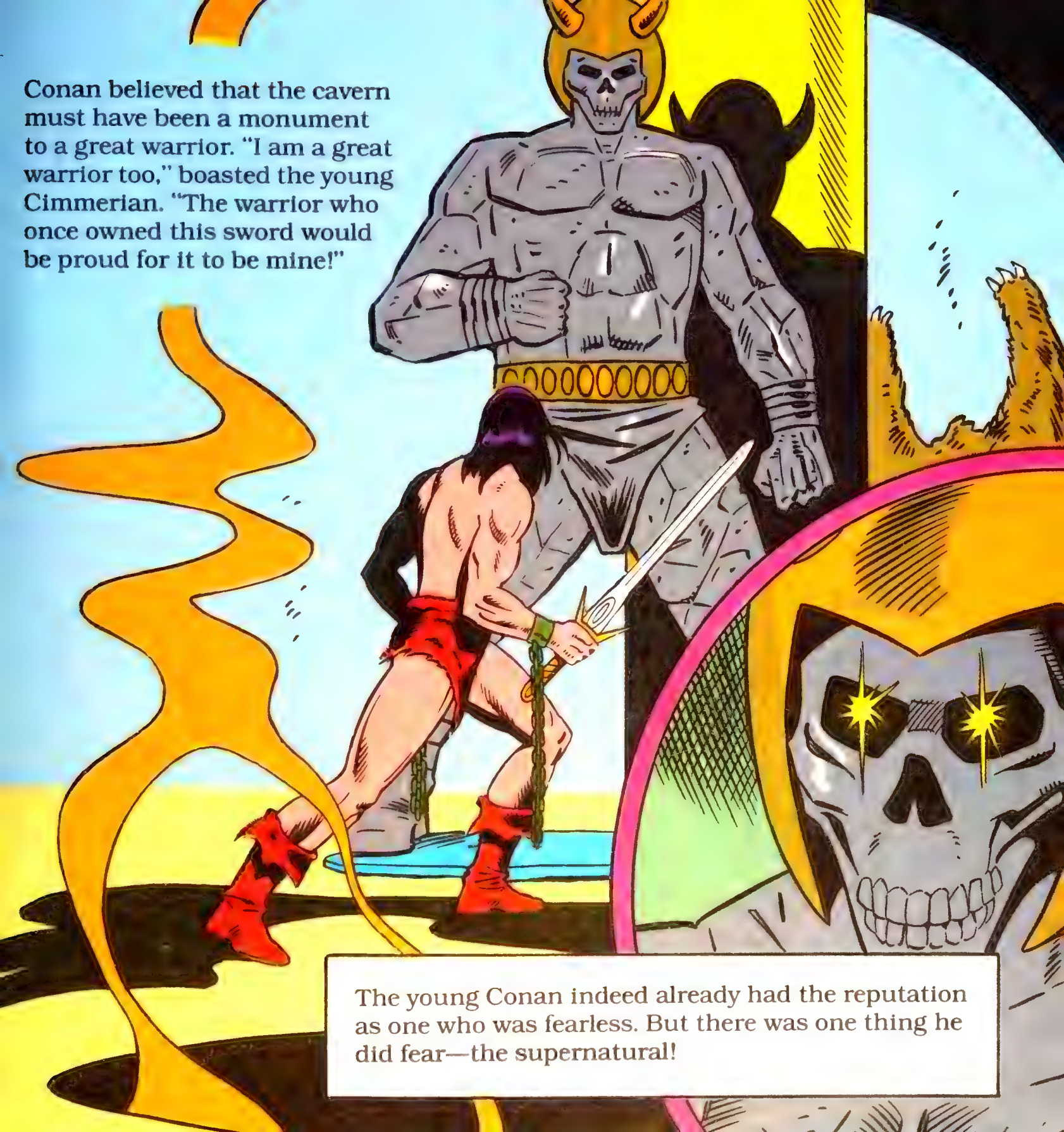
The Cimmerian's strength was drained by fatigue and hunger. His only weapons were the chains that had once bound him to the wall of a Hyperborean dungeon. Whirling the chains, he struck a blow that echoed through the frosty forest for miles.

As the iron chains met the yielding ice, cracks snaked across the frozen river. The snarling wolves fell into the raging waters, and their howls filled the night.

The cold numbed Conan's pain, and at long last, he yielded to the exhaustion that filled every muscle of his body. Leaning against a cliff, Conan felt the rocks behind him shift. A hidden chamber swallowed him whole.
Suddenly, the whole world seemed to turn to darkness as the Cimmerian fell.
CROM!

With a thump, Conan landed on the floor of a strangely warm cavern. It appeared to be the temple of an ancient stone giant, carved so long ago that none who lived remembered the lost race that had made it.

Conan was grateful for the warmth. He peered into a deep pit and saw the fiery heart of a volcanic mountain. What was this place? Conan forced his aching muscles onward to explore the eerie cavern room.


Conan believed that the cavern must have been a monument to a great warrior. "I am a great warrior too," boasted the young Cimmerian. "The warrior who once owned this sword would be proud for it to be mine!"
The young Conan indeed already had the reputation as one who was fearless. But there was one thing he did fear—the supernatural!

A fear as cold as the icy forest outside clutched Conan's heart as he fled from the living stone statue. His only thought was to escape from the rock monstrosity that reached for him.
CROM'S DEVILS!

Fear rekindled Conan's mighty strength. His muscled arms swung the broadsword completely through the stone creature's wrist.
ARRRRAAGH!!
With an unearthly scream, the creature whirled in pain, hurling Conan from his rocky perch.
ARRRRAAGH!!

"This sword is mighty," Conan said. "It cuts through stone."
He rushed the living statue to attack anew when something grabbed his running foot.
"The severed stone hand," cried Conan. "It still lives!"

Frantically, Conan hacked at the stone fist that held him fast, fearing that he would cut his own ankle if he struck too close.
Seeing his helplessness, the stone monster advanced.

Suddenly, Conan saw his only chance for survival. With one last mighty effort, he swung the stone-cutting broadsword through the very ankles of the monster.

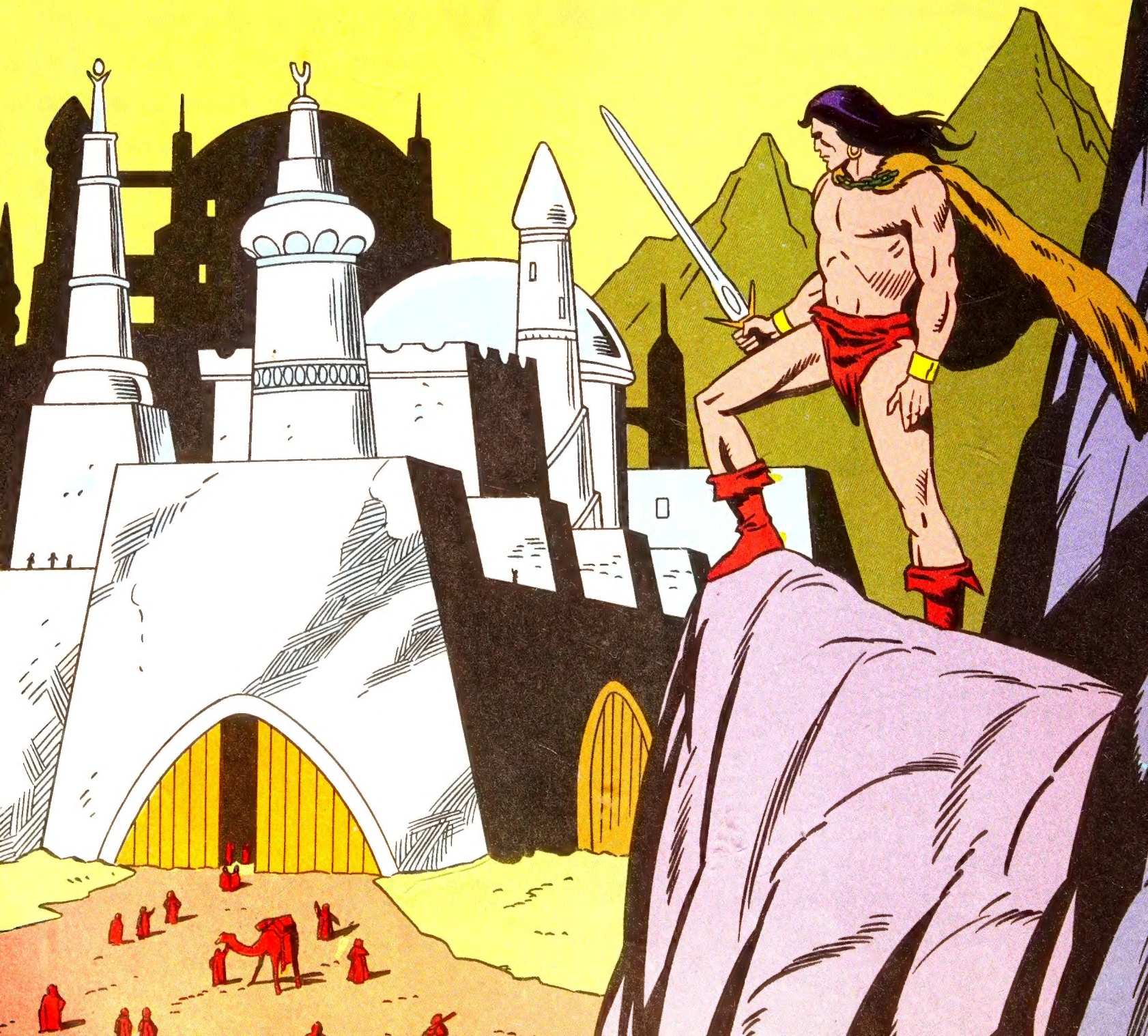
"There!" shouted the barbarian. "Meet a fiery doom, demon!"

ARRRRRRRAAAAGH!

As the monster melted far below, its severed hand and feet crumbled back into the dust from which they were made by sorcery of old.

Having won his life with the sword, Conan used his new weapon to free himself forever from the Hyperborean chains. Clad in the ancient furs from the stone monster's cave, he ventured forth once again as the sun greeted a new day.

But Conan's flight was halted by a sight his barbarian eyes had never seen until that moment—civilization. How would his savage cunning and strength fare against the minds and power of civilized people? The answer to that question lies elsewhere.



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